

# How to Recycle Metal!

Metal encompasses everything from aluminum foil to clothes hangers, but it can all be recycled in some way. Curbside collection programs often exist for metals like aluminum cans, while other metals have to be taken to a drop-off center that can properly recycle or dispose of the material. Many drop-off centers will even pay you to recycle scrap metal/

## Frequent Metal Recycling Questions

### **I'm trying to recycle scrap metal, what types of metal do scrap yards take?**

The most common metals accepted by scrap yards include copper, steel, aluminum, brass, iron and **wires**. But your local scrap yard may accept additional metals for recycling and give you cash payouts for your scrap metals. Call a few scrap yards in your area ahead of time for a list of scrap metals they accept for recycling.

### **How can I tell what type of metal I have?**

When you're trying to recycle scrap metal it's important to identify what type of metal you have. The easiest way to determine what type of metal you're dealing with is to use a magnet. If the magnet sticks to your metal, you have a ferrous metal in your hands, such as steel or iron. Most ferrous metals are not worth much money at scrap yards, but the scrap yard will still accept it and make sure it is recycled properly.

If the magnet doesn't stick, you have a non-ferrous metal, such as copper, aluminum, brass, stainless steel or bronze. These metals are very valuable to recycle and are worth more money at scrap yards.

From there, you can use color, texture and other visual aids to figure out exactly what type of metal you're dealing with.

### **What metals can I resell?**

Non-ferrous metals, such as copper, aluminum, brass, stainless steel and bronze, are worth more money at scrap yards. Ferrous metals, like steel and iron, are not as valuable, but scrap yards will still accept these metals for recycling.

# How can I find out how much different metals are worth?

See the [basic guide](#) below it will give you a general estimate of how much each type of metal is worth at a scrap yard. But the best way to determine the payout you'll receive in your area is to call each scrap yard individually ahead of time. Cash payouts may differ slightly from yard to yard, so you may want to "shop around" a bit for the best price.

## Do I have to have a lot of metal to take it to a scrap yard?

Scrap yards will accept any quantity of metal for recycling, but your payout is determined by weight. If you bring only a few pieces of metal to the scrap yard, they will still recycle it for you, but you'll likely receive little or no payout for your metals.

If you're looking for more cash, try storing metals until you've stockpiled a decent amount, or head to the scrap yard with friends and neighbors for a larger payout for all.

## Can I take my old metal hangers back to the dry cleaner for reuse/recycling?

Many dry cleaners will gladly accept wire hangers for reuse, and some even have designated collection bins for unwanted hangers. If your local dry cleaner does not accept wire hangers, you may also be able to recycle them through your local curbside program. [Jump to the recycling locator](#) to find a program near you. Note that not all curbside programs accept hangers, so check with your local recycling coordinator or use the locator below before tossing hangers into your curbside bin.

This information is from "Earth 911" [Earth911.com](http://Earth911.com)

### Basic Guide

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Recycling and reusing items like [plastic bottles](#), hand-me-down [clothing](#) and [newspapers](#) is important to make part of one's every day routine to help increase the green movement. One section of the recycling industry that may not be as popular, but just as important, is scrap metal recycling. Scrap metal exports are

one of the largest in the US and by recycling metals, we reduce the amount of ore drilling throughout the world.

Some of these metals include copper, steel, aluminum, brass, iron and wires, but they are often tossed in the garbage due to the lack of knowledge and sources for metal recycling. We're here to help educate the community to keep an eye out for those opportunities to grab some metal and bring it to the right place.

## Recycling Scrap Metal Makes Money

What many people don't know is that most scrap metal can be recycled for cash payments at local scrap yards around the country, thus adding to the green movement.

Scrap metal yards deal with customers that are in the trade industry that come across metal on a daily basis. Many could be construction companies that may have tons of steel beams from structures, electricians that could have wires and electrical equipment or plumbers that have copper piping and brass fixtures. While scrap yards see a large quantity of these metals from the trade industry, homeowners are always welcomed and encouraged to bring their own metal scrap to make money and recycle the metals at the right place.

## A Magnet Assesses Metal Value

Determining if you have a ferrous or non-ferrous metal and separating it is the first important step before bringing it to be recycled. The easiest and most common way to figure out what kind of metal you have is by grabbing a magnet.

*Hint: If you don't have a handheld magnet handy, any magnet will do – even one from your fridge.*

**If the magnet sticks to your metal:** You have a ferrous metal in your hands, something common like steel or iron. Ferrous metal is not worth very much when you bring it to the scrap yard, but the scrap yard will still accept it and make sure it is recycled properly.

**If the magnet does not stick to your metal:** The metal you have is a non-ferrous metal. Many common metals, like copper, aluminum, brass, stainless steel and bronze are categorized as non-ferrous metals. These metals are very valuable to recycle and are worth more money at the scrap yard.

Once you have your metals separated, give your local scrap yard a call to see what metals they accept and get insight on their procedures so you know before you go.

Often times, homeowners feel intimidated going to a scrap yard, but making sure you have your metals separated the best of your ability is the step in the right direction. Some scrap yards will require you to pull up to their doors and unload your metal onto their scale, where other yards will take it out themselves.

## It Helps to Know Your Metals

The most challenging part of metal recycling is recognizing what material you are looking at and what it is worth. Know these basic metals and it gets a whole lot easier:

### Copper – \$\$\$\$

Copper is a reddish color if it is in good condition, and if it is a bit worn it can have a darker brown color with some green rusted areas.

Copper is a common material in the structure of homes. It can be found in your home as plumbing pipes, roofing materials like gutters, within the inside of air conditioners and common electric wires.

Copper can also be found in electrical wires and underneath that black or colored plastic insulation is bright colored copper wire.

Copper is one of the most valuable metals to recycle, so collecting it and keeping the different kinds separate can earn you some “pat-on-the-back” money for recycling it with your scrap yard.

### Aluminum – \$

Aluminum is often painted with white paint, but is a whitish, silver color and can easily be bent if it is thin.

Aluminum cans are not the only place you can find this metal. While cans are often collected and brought to the scrap yards in bulk, aluminum can also be found in many places throughout your house.

Often used for gutters, siding, window frames, doors, and more, aluminum is in more places than you can imagine.

While aluminum is not worth a lot of money at the scrap yard, a common piece of aluminum can be recycled and used again within a few months. Recycling aluminum saves 80% of the energy that was used to make it.

# Brass – \$\$

Brass is yellowish with a hint of red in it and is a very heavy metal.

Brass can often be found in hardware like keys, door handles, light fixtures and bathroom fixtures.

Composed of copper and zinc together, brass is used often in plumbing fixtures and also at the end of copper piping. A mid-level priced item at a scrap yard, brass can add up quickly in weight because of how dense it is.

# Steel – \$

Steel can often rust very easily and a magnet will stick to it.

Steel is one of the most common metals used throughout the world. It can be found in many places, from your car to chairs, shelves, cabinets and more.

While it is not worth much at a scrap yard unless you have thousands of pounds of it, it is still wise to collect it and bring it to be recycled the right way.